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Mass for Pentecost: the work of salvation regenerates and frees from orphanhood

Vatican City, 15 May 2016 – At 10 a.m. today, Solemnity of Pentecost, Pope Francis presided at Holy Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, concelebrating with the cardinals, bishops and priests present. After the proclamation of the Gospel, the Holy Father pronounced a homily starting from Jesus' phrase in the Gospel of St. John, "I will not leave you orphans", in which he emphasised that the central purpose of Jesus' mission, which culminated in the gift of the Holy Spirit, was to renew our relationship with the Father, a relationship severed by sin, to take us from our state of being orphaned children and to restore us as His sons and daughters.

"The Apostle Paul, writing to the Christians in Rome, says: 'For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship, which enables us to cry out, "Abba, Father"'. Here we see our relationship renewed: the paternity of God is re-established in us thanks to the redemptive work of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit", explained the Holy Father.

"The Spirit is given to us by the Father and leads us back to the Father. The entire work of salvation is one of 'regeneration', in which the fatherhood of God, through the gift of the Son and the Holy Spirit, frees us from the condition of being orphans into which we had fallen. In our own day also, we see various signs of our being orphans: in the interior loneliness which we feel even when we are surrounded by people, a loneliness which can become an existential sadness; in the attempt to be free of God, even if accompanied by a desire for His presence; in the all-too-common spiritual illiteracy which renders us incapable of prayer; in the difficulty in grasping the truth and reality of eternal life as that fullness of communion which begins on earth and reaches full flower after death; in the effort to see others as 'brothers' and 'sisters', since we are children of the same Father; and other such signs."

Being children of God runs contrary to all this, "and is our primordial vocation. We were made to be God's children, it is in our DNA. But this filial relationship was ruined and required the sacrifice of God's only-begotten Son in order to be restored. From the immense gift of love which is Jesus' death on the cross, the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon humanity like a vast torrent of grace. Those who by faith are immersed into this mystery of regeneration are reborn to the fullness of filial life."

"I will not leave you orphans", Francis repeated. "Today, on the feast of Pentecost, Jesus' words remind us also of the maternal presence of Mary in the Upper Room. The Mother of Jesus is with the community of disciples gathered in prayer: she is the living remembrance of the Son and the living invocation of the Holy Spirit. She is the Mother of the Church. We entrust to her intercession, in a particular way, all Christians, families and communities that at this moment are most in need of the Spirit, the Paraclete, the Defender and Comforter, the Spirit of truth, freedom and peace."

The Spirit, as St. Paul says, "unites us to Christ: 'Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him'. Strengthening our relationship of belonging to the Lord Jesus, the Spirit enables us to enter into a new experience of fraternity. By means of our universal Brother – Jesus – we can relate to one another in a new way; no longer as orphans, but rather as children of the same good and merciful Father. And this changes everything! We can see each other as brothers and sisters whose differences can only increase our joy and wonder at sharing in this unique fatherhood and brotherhood."
